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Thirty-fifth session
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Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Hisham ELZIMAITY (Egypt)

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Section 25. Public information

1. At its 24th meeting, on 2 June 1995, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 25, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

Discussion

2. Several delegations expressed satisfaction with the proposed reductions in the budget of the Department of Public Information. Some delegations stressed that further reductions could have been achieved through greater economy measures and improved productivity. Many delegations stated that budget reductions should not be seen as an end in themselves and emphasized concern that such reductions could have a negative impact on the programme of work of the Department. They sought clear assurances from the Secretariat in that regard.

3. Many delegations stressed the need for adequate resources to be allocated to provide backstopping for public information activities of peace-keeping missions and made reference to the recommendations contained in the evaluation report on peace-keeping operations (E/AC.51/1995/2). They expressed concern that no separate unit, either in the Department of Public Information or the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, had been identified to provide such support. Many other delegations emphasized their support for the Secretary-General's decision to assign responsibility for the information component of the peace-keeping operations to the Department of Public Information. One delegation emphasized that any increase for that purpose should be achieved through internal redeployment of resources.

4. Several delegations emphasized the importance of the role of information in raising public awareness of issues facing the Organization and its members. Many delegations suggested that while a significant level of resources were assigned to cover issues of peace and security, more emphasis should be placed on coverage of economic and social concerns, including issues of debt, trade and poverty, and urged the Department to strive for a balance between activities relating to peace-keeping and those relating to development. Other delegations felt that insufficient resources were being devoted to information on peace and security-related activities given their impact on public perceptions of the Organization.

5. Several delegations emphasized the importance of the work of the United Nations information centres and services in promoting a greater understanding of the issues facing the Organization and of its activities. Several delegations queried the growth proposed in the resources of the Information Service at Geneva and emphasized the importance of a clearer division of responsibility between the Information Services at Geneva and Vienna.

6. Many delegations commended the Department on its efforts in utilizing electronic media as an efficient and cost-effective method of implementing its work programme and felt that greater economies could be achieved through a greater concentration on such electronic media. Many other delegations emphasized the importance of responding to the needs of developing countries in that context, since access to such media was relatively limited. They stressed the importance of giving continuing attention to radio and print media.

7. Some delegations emphasized the need for a periodic review of the Department's publications programme with a view to identifying obsolete publications. Some other delegations stressed that any revision to the mandated programme of work of the Department would have to be endorsed by the General Assembly.

8. Many delegations emphasized the importance of achieving parity in the production of outputs in the working languages of the Organization and emphasized the importance of the use of all United Nations languages. Some delegations stressed that, to reach as large an audience as possible, more items and material should be produced, as far as possible, in local languages.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it approve the programme narrative of section 25, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.